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C O N F I D E N T I A L SEOUL 004210

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E.O. 12958: DECL: 12/10/2014

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SUBJECT: ROK'S IRAQ ZAYTUN TROOP DEPLOYMENT EXTENSION:
UPDATE

REF: SEOUL 4156

Classified By: POL M/C Joseph Y. Yun. Reasons 1.4 (b,d).

¶1. (SBU) The bill to extend the ROK Zaytun troop deployment to Iraq was submitted to the National Assembly's Defense Committee on December 6 calling for a one-year renewal of the deployment and a reduction in troops from 2,400 to 1,200. The bill currently calls for the ROK to complete its mission by the end of 2007, but no mention of a full-scale pullout of troops. December 12, the Defense Committee will address the bill again and it is likely to pass to the plenary session at that time. The GNP members of the Defense Committee will push to remove any provisions in the bill that hint at pullout of the troops.

Uri Party Position

¶2. (SBU) The Uri Party has passed a party position (Reftel) calling for a provision for complete withdrawal in the motion for renewal and some are calling for more specific language than the current vague reference to mission completion. According to Uri sources on the Defense Committee, some provision will be attached to the renewal bill but it will likely not emphasize complete withdrawal. Committee Member Lee Keun-sik told the press that, "the ROKG must submit to the National Assembly by June, 2007 its plan on concluding the mission, and the deadline for mission conclusion shall be within 2007."

GNP Position

¶3. (C) The opposition Grand National Party (GNP) has not adopted a party position on the troop renewal bill although it is clear most members support the renewal and with no pullout conditions attached. According to GNP sources on the Defense Committee, the GNP has not decided if it will adopt a party position or allow free voting on the renewal issue. Either way, of the GNP's 127 members, only a handful is likely to come out against the renewal. Some GNP members are hoping that some Korean companies can begin to start projects in northern Iraq and if so, the GNP will argue for an even longer-term military commitment to Iraq in order to protect Korean business interests.

Comment

14. (C) With strong GNP support and many Uri Party members conceding the renewal of the Iraq Zaytun troop deployment should happen in view of the ROK-U.S. alliance, the ROK commitment in Iraq into 2007 is virtually assured. The main uncertainty is whether the GNP will fight hard to remove any Uri Party drafted provisions on a complete pullout to the bill. Since the Uri Party, along with the Democratic Party, has enough votes to push through its version of the bill in committee and the plenary, it is possible that there will be some provision in the renewal bill about completion of the ROK Iraq mission in 2007.

VERSHBOW